

hours one day while here. She had only twelve hours' duty. While ill I gave her all the attention I could, including medicine. She was taken to and from the street car in the carriage, although it was only a ten minutes' walk. Am I unjust in thinking that she was entitled to charge only pro rata for the portion of the week, since she left for her own convenience, and that she had no right to the extra for laundry? What do other private nurses do in regard to laundry? When it is not convenient to have it done in my patient's home, I have always paid for having it done outside, and I certainly never charged extra for soiled clothes I took home because I left before wash-day.

I want to thank the author of "The Timid Nurse" and to offer her my sympathy. How many times have I felt that "I hate to go, and I hate to stay," but had not the ability to express it so cleverly. I hope she will pass through her slough of despond and come out the other side as I have.

I. P.

RANK FOR ARMY NURSES

DEAR EDITOR: It is well nigh impossible for those who know the Army Nurse Corps only through hearsay to estimate justly what it has to offer. From those who have had a long and happy experience in its ranks, but little is heard. It is the soreheads who rush into print—those who have been discharged for one cause or another, or who were unable to secure a reappointment when they would have liked to have one. It is these who seem to wish to extend and perpetuate their own disaffection, and yet who resent bitterly any suggestion that their love of country may be somewhat lukewarm. It will be long before we can forget that correspondent who in an open letter asked "*why should we?*" (respond to a call for nurses), and who threw into the balance with her "patriotism" the possible "laundry and mess bills." It was the weight of the latter which decided for her that nurses were not called upon to serve Uncle Sam—to help to make his sick soldiers comfortable, and to nurse them back to health.

Conditions in the Army Nurse Corps may leave a good deal to be desired, but no devil is as black as he is painted. When it is remembered—

1. That ever since the Spanish-American War the Medical Department has been handicapped by a deficiency of about two hundred officers, actually required to perform the necessary work of that department;
2. That this lack has had to be supplied by civil physicians under

contract, who have no rank whatever, and no status in the regular establishment, except to look after the sick;

3. That to consider the question of rank for army nurses until after the Medical Department has been given regularly commissioned officers to do its work would be preposterous, as it would make the nurses take precedence over two hundred doctors now on duty in various places, and from whom the nurses may at any time be obliged to take orders;

4. That there are, besides these two hundred contract surgeons, thirty dental surgeons and veterinary surgeons, who have no military rank, employed by the army.

Altogether too much emphasis has been laid upon this matter of *rank* for nurses by those who have little knowledge of the inside facts. Even were this step the most desirable thing for army nurses, it can be achieved only by an act of Congress, and the stupendous difficulty of getting that great body to legislate is but little understood. The Medical Department has been trying for four or more years to get its bill through for the reorganization of its corps. The President has made this legislation the subject of one or more special messages, urging its importance, the Secretary of War has argued again and again in its favor before the Committee on Military Affairs, and yet it hangs fire.

Of Mark Twain, who has recently been in Washington to look after legislation on copyright laws, it is said: "Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain) was at the Capitol yesterday, and took an informal leave of Speaker Cannon and Vice-President Fairbanks and other prominent members of the national legislature. He told 'Uncle Joe' that he was sorry to depart without receiving the thanks of Congress he had requested, as he needed it in his business; but it had been intimated to him that *if he would get out of town and leave Congress alone, the deferred thanks might be forthcoming at once*. If the surmise should prove true, Uncle Joe, it is understood, will forward the 'thanks' to the noted humorist by special delivery letter. Mr. Clemens said he felt he had accomplished all he could for the copyright cause for the present, and that no good would result from his remaining here any longer; in fact, *'he thought he might undo all of his missionary work if he continued to longer haunt the halls of legislation.'*

"'I have found out several things since I have been in Washington,' said Mr. Clemens yesterday. 'I could write a book on my discoveries and not enumerate all of them. I have learned among other things that legislation is a much more complicated proposition than I ever dreamed it to be. It looked very simple and easy at a distance, but a closer view has given me quite a different impression.'"

It is only within the past ten years that the medical men of the Austrian army have held commissions, and to-day the doctors of the Russian army have only what is known as a "chin" rank, and this they hold in common with many civilians—bankers, college professors, etc. So when all is said and done it is difficult to feel that army nurses are as greatly wronged because they have no rank, as many people would have us believe.

On the other hand, army nurses enjoy many advantages which are not to be found in any other nursing service, institutional or private work—*i.e.*, the certainty of change, of variety of environment and work, which is so great a rest, regular hours, and, above all, the great advantage of travel, that greatest of all educators. Many members of the Nurse Corps have, under official orders, made the circuit of the globe, and some there are who have done this more than once. Nurses on leave in the Orient have opportunity to visit China and Japan, and those on duty in the southern islands have curious and interesting experiences, not all of which are delightful, to be sure, but no one having had them can help being a better nurse and a more resourceful woman. From start to finish, the entire experience as an army nurse is unique. There is and can be no other quite like it. Not that a sick soldier is at all different from a sick civilian, so far as concerns his disability, but his point of view is radically different. All those who have ministered to him will bear me out in the assertion that the soldier makes an ideal patient, bearing suffering with fortitude, willing to do as he is told, prompt in his obedience, and grateful and appreciative of the efforts made in his behalf.

In the army hospital scientific and technical processes are no different from those found in the best civil institutions. But the administrative business of the one is totally unlike that of the other, and military etiquette and procedure have an individuality all their own. It matters not what advantages a nurse may have enjoyed during and subsequent to her training; to be in charge of one of the large wards (forty to eighty beds) of a general hospital, and to keep the records, is a liberal education.

The social status of a nurse in the army is determined as it is in civil life, by that to which, as an individual, her personality, her education, her birth and breeding, entitle her. One thing, however, must be clearly understood: Military discipline demands that between the officers and enlisted men there is a "great gulf fixed," as impassable as the space between heaven and earth. No bridge can span it, and none may pass to and fro between the two. It is in no sense a question of one being

better or worse, higher or lower, more educated or more ignorant, than the other, but simply and wholly a question of *place*—of strata, so to speak. Nothing short of some awful convulsion of nature can give the upper one “a dip,” or bring the lower one to the surface. It is obvious then that no nurse can expect to choose her associates from both.

In the foregoing an endeavor has been made to explain some of the conditions in the Army Nurse Corps which have been the fruitful source of unfavorable criticism, and at the same time to set forth some of the advantages which that service has to offer to the nurse joining its ranks.

But, thank God, there are still to be found those who truly love their country, and who “care more for what they give than for what they get.” The true measure of love is always service—the service which seeketh not its own. This service it is which counts in this world, and which will be remembered in the next. “To her much shall be forgiven because she loved much.”

D. H. KINNEY.

[Certainly Mrs. Kinney's letter holds little to encourage the large number of nurses who feel keenly that the establishment of rank for the army nurse would do away with much that at present they decline to endure. It may not be quite correct to call the group of women by whose labors the army nurse corps was established “a convulsion of nature,” but perhaps if they had another seizure it might result in rank for the army nurse.—Ed.]

